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Thus Does Gaming Harden the Heart and Swallow up Every Good Affection

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Pride and Prejudice: The Student Blog

Wednesday, March 13, 2013

Thus Does Gaming Harden the Heart and Swallow up Every Good Affection

“The Story of Poor Tricket the Gamester” is a short story published in 1795 as part of the Cheap Repository for Religious and Moral Tracts many of which were written by Hannah Moore. The Cheap Repository consists of highly morally guided tales about gambling, drinking, and debauchery targeted toward a literate but lower social class of people. These tracts were sold at a very low price to the poor indicated by the sale price for The Gamester of one penny (1). This particular story follows Tricket who is an avid gambler through his downfall, the death of his wife, and his eventual shipment to Botany Bay for convicts. The tale is hyperbolic, overly sentimental and the author uses little decorum in conveying the moral. For example, After Tricket’s wife dies having “fell in a fainting fit at his feet” over her grief for his gambling and their penniless lives the reader is treated to the sounds of the children crying “Mammy! Mammy!” (8). Then, if the reader doubts Tricket’s fault in his wife’s death we are reminded in a barrage of exclamation shortly after, “My Wife! My Wife! Come to her if you have any pity! I have killed her! Help! Help!” (8). The immorality and dangers of gambling are hammered home toward the end of the text as Tricket faces a death sentence as a result of his gambling. Don’t Worry! “Some favorable circumstances in his case were reported to His Majesty by the Judge and his sentence was in consequence changed from death to transportation” This punishment was obviously disproportionate to the crime and the intervention of the King unrealistic as Tricket is of a much lower social class. However, the goal of this tale is to bluntly unabashedly promote a certain morality and value system by its authors by scaring and shocking its readers. Clearly, this text isn’t meant to delve in the subtleties of literary technique and decorum. Perhaps, today’s equivalent to Tricket’s downfall might be the famous satirical line from Mean Girls “If you have sex, you will get pregnant, and then you will die” but for the Regency, If you gamble, your wife will die, and you will probably be sentenced to die. Gambling was of course a common form of entertainment in the Regency from lotteries to horse racing which didn’t necessitate death or the loss of your spouse



Such is the sad story of poor Tricket the Gamester! Let each reader lay to heart the dreadful consequences of gambling: for, by first bringing a man to want, it will harden his heart even against his most beloved wife and children; and who knows whether it may not also drive him to those criminal acts, for which his very life may be justly forfeited to the laws of his country.

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About

A blog site featuring original research by undergraduate students at Wright State University enrolled in Crystal B. Lal's course on *Pride and Prejudice* (Spring 2011)

We hope you enjoy reading about the novel and historical contexts surrounding the famous novel. And be sure to participate in CELIA's Bicentennial events on October 2013. Click [here](#) for more information.

Blog Archive

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 - She Heard Him With A Visible Emotion
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In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* the most obvious example of gambling in the novel, is of course Mr. Wickham. Mr. Wickham's gambling habit tarnishes his reputation not from its mere existence but from his inability to pay his debts. His actions don't carry positive overtones in the novel as he is eventually forced to give up his officer position in the militia and move to a different regiment due to his debts. To the modern reader, this may seem like a clear disapproval of Wickham or gambling itself, however, we see a sharp contrast in the way Austen punishes Wickham's gambling from the way the author punishes Tricket in "The Gamester". While Tricket's downfall may be a more extreme example of an author signaling disapproval or conveying a moral, Austen is definitely on the less explicit end of the spectrum. Austen could have easily killed Wickham or had him imprisoned to show her disapproval of his actions, but she doesn't. Austen is less explicit on her opinions on gambling, leaving the reader to navigate the morality on their own if she even intends them to at all.

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